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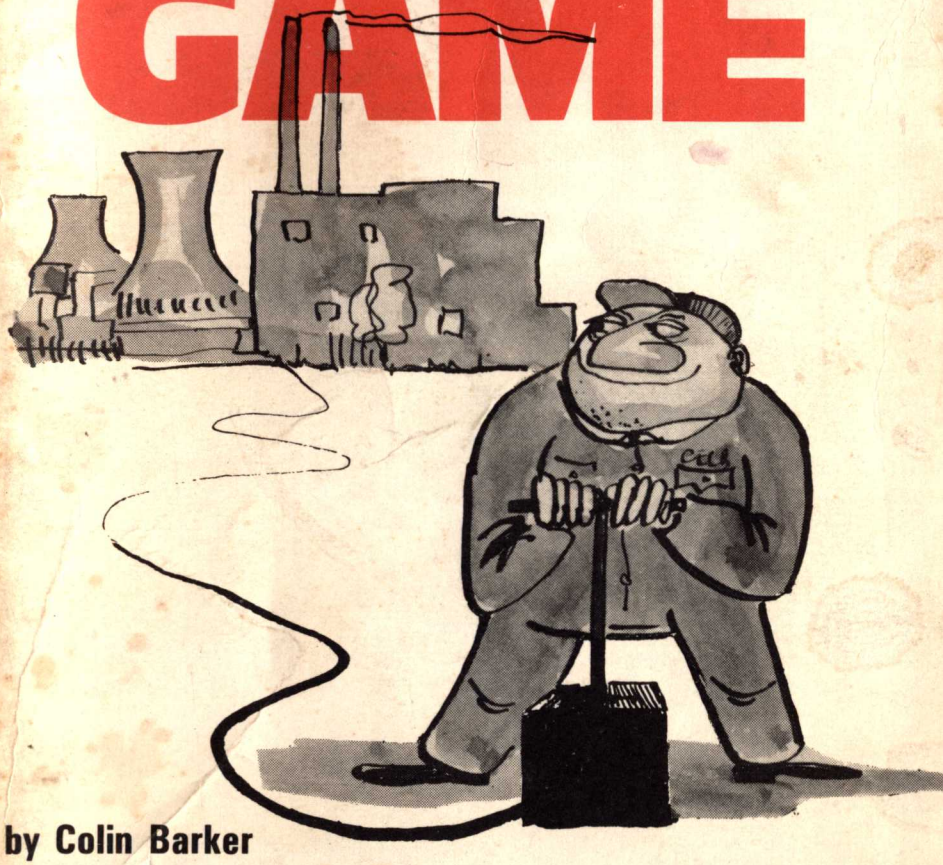
THE POWER GAME



by Colin Barker
illustrations by 'rag'

7 The Wilberforce Inquiry

The Tories selected their Court of Inquiry with great care. They rejected all union proposals for the Court's three-man membership. The chairman, Lord Wilberforce, was a High Court judge with long-standing links with the Tory Party. With him was Sir Raymond Brookes, chairman and chief executive of GKN, a company with a fine record of donations to Tory Party funds. Sir Raymond (knighted in the 1971 New Year lists) 'played a significant role in GKN-Sankey's stand against high wage demands during its six-week strike earlier this year', the *Financial Times* assured its readers. The third member, Mr. Jim Mortimer, had been an official of the Draughtsmen's Association, and had edited their union journal. But after writing some excellent articles attacking Labour's prices and incomes policy he joined, of all things, the Prices and Incomes Board. At the time of the Court of Inquiry he was about to take up a post as industrial relations director with London Transport, where his chief job would be to help keep busmen's pay down. He was decidedly a man who had crossed from the trade-union side.

The members of the Court were clearly chosen for their attitude rather than their expertise. During the inquiry the chairman admitted he probably would not understand economic arguments! The Government made sure the Court's members were kept on the straight and narrow, however, by appointing as their secretary an unusually high-ranking civil servant, the top man in the DEP section dealing with incomes policy. Nor was the Government greatly concerned to give even the appearance of justice during the inquiry. They put up as a Treasury witness Sir Douglas Allen who preached the virtues of restraint to the supply workers while admitting that his own salary was going up from £10,400 to £15,000 a year. The Court of Inquiry

was directed by the Government to consider 'the interests of the public and of the national economy'. So that they should have no doubt as to what this meant, the Treasury published written evidence to the Court. This document suggested that the 'nation's' main problem is inflation, i.e. rising prices, and that the main cause of this is rising wages. And what was to be done about this?

> 'The Government has made clear its view that the interests of the public and of the national economy require a progressive and substantial reduction in the level of pay settlements. It considers that this can be achieved – and can only be achieved – if all those responsible for pay determination accept the over-riding need to reduce the rate of inflation'.[40]

The over-riding problem, then, is not unemployment, or poverty, or waste in industry. It is inflation, which is, by Treasury definition, caused by pay rises. Each separate pay settlement is important, because of its influence on other pay settlements. 'The size of one settlement influences the next . . . it is necessary to break into the circle somewhere'.[41] And 'breaking into the circle' is what the Government wanted the Wilberforce Inquiry to be about: put in plain English, one important group of workers must have their pay claim broken. They were not to be disappointed.

The Court of Inquiry declared that there was no case for a general rise in pay above the employers' final offer of £2: 'We believe . . . the settlement we recommend ought not to intensify inflationary pressures'.[42] But to this very bitter pill the Report added a couple of very thin sweeteners. Skilled grades (G and H) would get another £35

The Court of Inquiry as the Guardian *saw it*

a year (67p a week), along with foremen. Shift allowances went up by £20 a year (38p a week), or £17.50 (34p) for two-shift working. And holidays were raised by three days, to bring them into line with the non-industrial staff. (Note that the manual workers were supposed to have gained 'staff status' in 1964, but only got comparable holidays in 1971. The employers still refused to abolish time-clocks for manual workers. What a fraud 'staff status' was!) The last main proposal was the really deadly one. The Court noted that the employers had been slow at getting 'pay and productivity' schemes through. After three years, only 20% of the work force was covered by them. In the same three years the number of manual workers in the industry had been cut by 18.8%. If the reduction of the labour force was to be speeded up, some bribe was needed. The chosen weapon was the 'lead-in payment', explained by the Court of Inquiry as follows:

'. . . an early opportunity formally to accept the introduction of an incentive scheme as soon as it can be offered to them, and accept at the same time the consequences involved'.[43]

This 'opportunity to accept . . . the consequences' would be made attractive by offering £1, rising to £1.50 and £2, to each group of workers who were ready to 'accept formally'. If any group of workers turned down the kind offer of speed-up and redundancy they would of course be penalised by not getting the extra pay. The plan was brutally simple, and cynical in the extreme. Prices were rising rapidly, and the basic pay rise would not meet these price rises. Thus every power worker would be under direct economic compulsion to consider the extra money very seriously. If the stewards could persuade the men to turn down the lead-in payments, the employers could rely on continuing price rises to do their work in undermining solidarity. The second time round, the men might be weakened, especially as they would know that elsewhere in the country other workers had accepted the 'consequences'.

The Court of Inquiry did not suggest the employers even try to disguise the truth. All workers should be given

'a clear indication of the general nature of the scheme which would be offered to them and the nature of the changes in the work force and work methods which would be involved'.

The men would vote for their mates to lose their jobs. Rub their faces in it, hide nothing: that was the Wilberforce message:

'Such acceptance will involve acceptance by the individual workers of the following matters – which are already accepted by the Unions at national level as necessary for the introduction of schemes:—

(i) the carrying out of such work study and work measurement as management find necessary for the development of a scheme;

(ii) the need to run down staff numbers to the point where the scheme can be introduced and bonuses earned, whether through normal wastage or through measures to accelerate the run-down'.

The key to the matter was contained in the above quote: the main points are already accepted by the unions at national level. The battle, as far as the employers were concerned, was already won, for the general staff of the opposition had already surrendered. The only problem now was to persuade the rank and file, and as long as there is no independent leadership springing from their own ranks, the generals *can* surrender the army.

The Wilberforce Report was an important step forward for the Tories' plan to reduce working-class living standards. The unions had put in a claim for £5 16s. Later, Frank Chapple of the EETU-PTU had proclaimed publicly that nothing less than £3 would be acceptable. Before the work to rule, the employers' £2 offer was 'totally unacceptable' to the unions. Yet when the Wilberforce Report appeared, offering nothing more on the basic, a few small changes to shift holiday allowances plus the lead-in payments, the union leaders fell over themselves to acclaim it. Robert Carr, Tory Minister of Employment, received the Report with delight: 'It's an excellent report', he told the BBC news. Frank Chapple told the same programme, 'It's the basis for a settlement. It's a good report'. And Jack Biggin of the GMWU, leader of the union negotiators, declared, 'We believe it goes a long way to achieving what we set out to achieve'. Robert Carr was very pleased about the lead-in proposals: 'It's not talking about airy-fairy productivity', he said, 'it's talking about concrete improvements in productivity'. And he was right: the Report stated clearly:

'We believe that the formal acceptance by groups of workers of an incentive scheme will enable a faster run-down of the labour force than would otherwise be possible . . .'.[44]

But Jack Biggin for the union side was not worried:

'We have always had to face this situation. . . . No one likes a run-down in manpower. . . . (But the lead-in payment) does mean that people have an opportunity of getting money very quickly now where they accept the principle of going on to an incentive scheme'.

As the Treasury had suggested, each pay settlement influences others. In this case, by the time the Wilberforce Report appeared, the postmen had been on strike for several weeks. Many postmen, along with their union executive, were awaiting the Report in the

hope that the supply workers would get a good offer and that this would help their case. They were wrong. The Wilberforce Report was a nail in the postmen's coffin as much as the power workers'.

After a few weeks' shilly-shallying about, an agreement was reached precisely in line with Wilberforce. The unions were able to claim a last-minute 'victory' by securing an agreement that there would be no sackings in 1971 as long as workers accepted the lead-in payments. That was a non-victory – the agreement applies only to 1971; workers can leave voluntarily without being replaced; and workers who *reject* the lead-in money can be sacked anyway.

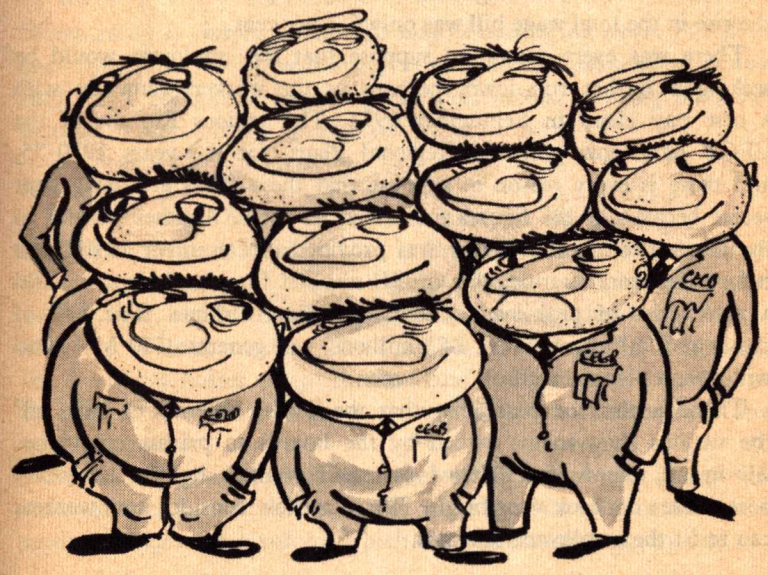
The final terms of the 1971 agreement stated that each worker in industry must receive his own copy of the agreement, and that at each work-place the management must organise a meeting, as soon as possible, to explain the lead-in payments and allow the workers there to vote on them. The burden of resistance was thrown sharply onto the shoulders of the stewards and militant workers, but in many areas there was simply no one to explain to workers the actual implications of the agreement, that accepting lead-in payments meant accepting a loss of jobs, and this in a period of rising unemployment. Even then, the militants who tried to stem the tide were at all kinds of disadvantage, for inflation put great pressure on the worker's pocket, and there was little information available to workers about what their fellow-workers were doing. One worker explained why his station voted for the payments by saying simply, 'We didn't know what else we could do'.

Another factor reducing resistance to lead-in payments was that at many stations one category of workers was less affected than another: at Blyth power station, for instance, the craftsmen expected no loss of jobs, while the semi-skilled side expected to lose 94 men.

The card were often stacked strongly against those who wished to oppose. At the meeting in Trafford power station, for example, the platform consisted of five senior managers from the region, the Superintendent and his Deputy, plus the District officer of the GMWU. The other union officials stayed away. The AEF steward had to force his right even to speak from the platform in opposition.

We have not heard of *one* case of a full-time union official attending these meetings and telling the men they were being sold a pup. Some officials said, *in private,* that they didn't like the terms, but what use is that?

In the circumstances, it is surprising that as many groups of workers *did* reject lead-in payments. The main area of resistance was the South East, with good traditions of rank and file militancy. Here 25 out of 50 sites rejected the schemes. In Edinburgh, jointers in distribution turned the schemes down because of the local unemployment situation. There were generally isolated groups of workers, dotted about the country, who rejected the schemes too. At some stations which turned down lead-in payments, management still tried to bring in the pay and productivity schemes by the back door. At Berkeley and Newton Abbot, for instance, they tried to issue new work cards with timings on them. The NJIC meeting in May 1971 had to concede that these must be withdrawn, when the Berkeley workers took the issue through procedure.



Spot the one who signed for P + P.

By July 1971, the employers claimed that 1,650 separate groups had accepted.[45] In the North West, the employers' paper was able to exult on the front page of its June edition that all but two of the 49 CEGB stations and districts had accepted lead-in payments. The article noted, accurately,

'Full-time Trade Union officials have been present at most meetings . . . and they have emphasised the official support of the Unions for the introduction of lead-in payments and their attached conditions.'[46]

According to the *Financial Times* (24 July 1971) some 10,000 jobs were expected to go by the end of the year. The employers were confident that by that time at least half the workers in the industry would be actually working on pay and productivity schemes, or actively engaged in negotiating them. They were confident, too, that natural wastage and voluntary redundancy would be able to solve their run-down problem, for 10,200 jobs had already gone in the year to April 1971. Of these more than half went through 'natural wastage', while of 4,227 men made redundant, only 40 refused to accept it voluntarily. (How *they* were sacked we do not know.) As a result of the run-down in the labour force, earnings had risen by 20 per cent on average, but the rise in the total wage bill was only 6-7 per cent.

There was every reason to suppose that the employers would be seeking a further run-down, perhaps as the workers came up with a new pay claim in September 1971. The various Regions of the CEGB have now prepared Regional Plans, for the years 1970-75, and there is every reason to suppose that these Plans are being kept secret because of the figures for labour in them. Another pointer to the job-future in the industry was provided in December 1970: just before the work to rule, the CEGB applied for permission to build a new series of peak-load stations, with gas turbines. The first of these, at Watford, will cost £6½ millions, will generate 150 MW, and will have a planned staff of . . . 12 men.[47]

There is also the possibility that the Tories will try to 'hive off' the various show-rooms owned by the Boards to private enterprise. All in all, the future planned for their workers by the electricity bosses does not look very bright. We must now consider how workers can resist the employers' schemes.

40 H.M. Treasury, *Memorandum* to the Court of Inquiry, Cmnd. 4579, 1971, p. 8.
41 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
42 *Wilberforce Report* (*op. cit.*), p. 38.
43 *Ibid.*, p. 43.
44 *Ibid*, p. 45.
45 *Financial Times*, 24 July 1971.
46 *North West Power*, June 1971.
47 *Financial Times*, 4 December 1970.

8 Work Study

'Work study is simply a scientific way of measuring work. . . . Work study puts the job of measuring work onto an independent trained staff and is recognised by management and unions as being the fairest method of assessing the effort involved'.[48]

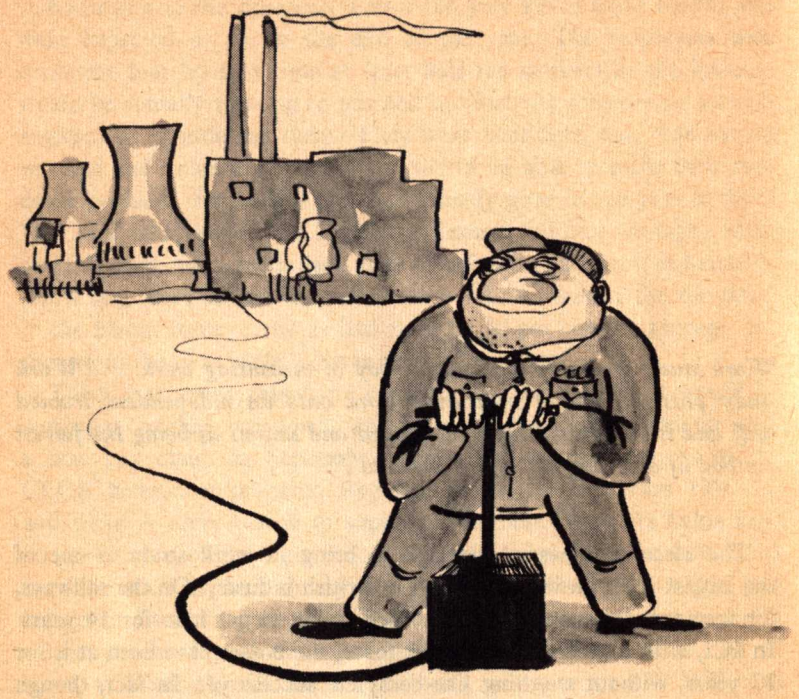
The electricity bosses' attempt to bring in work study is one of the largest-scale moves of its kind in British industry. On the railways, for instance, the employers have been trying to get it in for 14 years. In ICI, with a much smaller work force, the bosses have been at it for 17 years, without anything like complete success yet. In fact, though the electricity bosses complain about the slow progress, a comparison between their efforts and those of other employers makes them seem quite successful.

There is a good deal of nonsense talked and written about work study and incentives in the supply industry. Normally a number of separate stages are involved, which we will examine one by one.

Method Study

In work study manuals, this is the first stage – though in fact it has been virtually ignored on the *distribution* side of the supply industry. Normally, the work study man looks at a job and decides the best way of doing it. In supply, in fact, the employers have built up a long list of jobs with the work study view of the best way to do them. This 'Code of Best Practices' is maintained centrally. It has, so far as we know, never been negotiated with the unions.

These 'best practices' turn out, not surprisingly, to be 'best' for the employers. The aim of the operation is to find the *quickest* way of



Method Study

doing a job with the *smallest* number of workers. Method study, properly carried out, should result in the worker having to do less walking or humping of materials. But the time and effort saved does not come to the worker as an increase in his free time, but is used to make sure he does more work.

The *results* of work study in the industry, 1967 to 1970, tell the tale. While output rose, the number of industrial workers was cut by 18.8%, yet at the end of the 1970 the employers refused to cut the working week.

In fact, only when the working class owns and controls the whole of industry and runs it for the benefit of society rather than for profit will method study be something to help workers. *Then* it could be used to lighten our daily labour. But while industry is divided into classes, bosses and workers, method study is an employers' instrument, *against us*.

Job Description and Timing

When the 'best' way of doing a job is settled, the conditions under which it is done are observed and recorded. Whether you are hanging on a high tension cable, or standing on a ladder, or sitting at a desk, this is recorded. All your movements and postures, the tools you use, etc, get written down. In some systems, workers or their foremen are asked to sign the job description as an accurate account of what they do.

The work study man then proceeds to time the job. Commonly he uses a special stop-watch, whose face is divided into units of one-hundredth of a minute, or three-fifths of a second. The total time taken on a whole job, or various parts of the job, may be timed. These times are then written down. The time on the sheet is called an 'Actual Time' – though, as we shall see, the work study man is not satisfied with this.

Effort Rating

The 'actual time' a worker takes on a job is only of interest to the work study department when they have decided *how hard* that worker was actually working. Anyone who has ever been timed on piecework knows that a worker's main concern is with making the job look twice as complicated as it really is, to fool the ratefixer. The work study man has to decide how much effort the worker was really putting in and how much he was fiddling. If he decides the worker was only working at 50% of his potential efficiency, he will give a 'Basic Time' which is only *half* the 'Actual Time' the worker took.

How does he decide this percentage? The brief and correct answer is – by *guesswork*. Despite work study's gloss of 'science', it is really just 'guesstimating'. And effort rating is the part which most involves guessing. Some years ago a simple experiment was carried out in the USA, when work study men were asked to rate films of men doing various jobs. Then they were shown the same films a month

later. The *smallest* variation in the assessments made by individual work study men over the month was 10.1%, and the variations between individuals were as much as 28%.[49] That was in a laboratory; on the job the unreliability of effort-rating will be still greater.

Standard Time

Once the work study man has guessed the 'basic time', he must add a number of allowances to arrive at the 'standard time'. These allowances depend on the job description, but they must be included. Part A of the CEGB Specifications for the Productivity Payment Schemes states:

'The standard time allowed for a job includes both the basic time required to complete the task and allowances for contingencies, relaxation and general background activities'.

These allowances are given under a variety of headings. For example, a relaxation allowance is included in all power station jobs, of 5% for men and 7% for women. This means 24 minutes a day for men, 33.6 minutes for women. Now, why *this* amount for things like going to the lavatory, stretching, yawning, combing your hair, lighting a fag, or anything else you might like to list under 'personal needs'? Why only 5% and 7%? The allowance is clearly arbitrary. It is based on a 'scientific' assessment . . . of what the bosses think they can get away with.

This is made clearer when we discover that allowances for personal needs vary in different systems and industries. One study found they vary between 4% and 50%! In the building industry, 6 per cent is recommended.[50] In the National Ports Council scheme, the allowance is 10%.[51] Once you make comparisons, you can see what a shoddy trick the whole thing is!

When he has added up basic time and allowances, the work study man has arrived at his goal – 'standard time'. This is the time it takes to do a job at 'Standard performance', which is defined as follows:

'The rate of output which qualified workers will naturally achieve without over-exertion as an average over the working day or shift provided they know and adhere to the specified method and provided they are motivated to apply themselves to their work'.[52]

For both employer and worker, what matters about 'standard performance' is that once settled it determines workers' bonus earnings. 'Standard performance' scores 100. Any group of workers who score 100 get the top rate of bonus, 33⅓%

Scientific wrappings

The whole business of work study is wrapped up in very fancy phrases, and pseudo-science. In practice work study is actually guesswork, but the 'scientific' wrappings are actually important for the employers, to fool workers with. What is important, for the work-study men, is that they should try to convince workers that they are unbiased, that they have workers' interests at heart as much as management's. If they fail to do this, work-study becomes less effective for the employers.[53]

Work-study men themselves are often very aware of the deficiencies of the system. Thus one engineer told the author that in his Area Board, where a mate often has to wait while, say, a jointer is finishing one stage of a job before the next can be started, variations of 20% or more often emerge when the times for the skilled man and his mate are computed. He expressed the opinion that 'the use of times to an accuracy of 1/100th of a minute, high powered statisticians and computers is not warranted and only serves to impress the union officials. In fact, the larger part of work study is a *big con*'.

Waiting Time, etc.

Bonus is paid for anything above 65% of 'standard performance'. If a worker is kept waiting for work, through no fault of his own, he can ask to go onto 'waiting time'. If this request is 'authorised' he will earn no bonus. Management hold-ups are paid for by the workers!

There is another little managerial fiddle, called 'unmeasured work'. If you are doing a job which has not been work studied, you are on 'unmeasured work'. If this is 'authorised unmeasured work', in other words you were told to do it, you get paid on a special scale. If the unmeasured work does not count as 'emergency', you get your average bonus pay, *provided this is not worth more than 75% of 'standard performance'*. So, if you're slaving away at 100% and you get put on 'unmeasured work', you lose pay. Unless, that is, the work is classified as 'emergency', in which case you get your average bonus, *but not below the 75% level*. So, if there is a fire, you should first see the boss, ask for a written statement that there is an emergency, then clock onto 'unmeasured work' and *then* press the firebell. That's what the agreement suggests: if you don't get it 'authorised', you don't get paid.

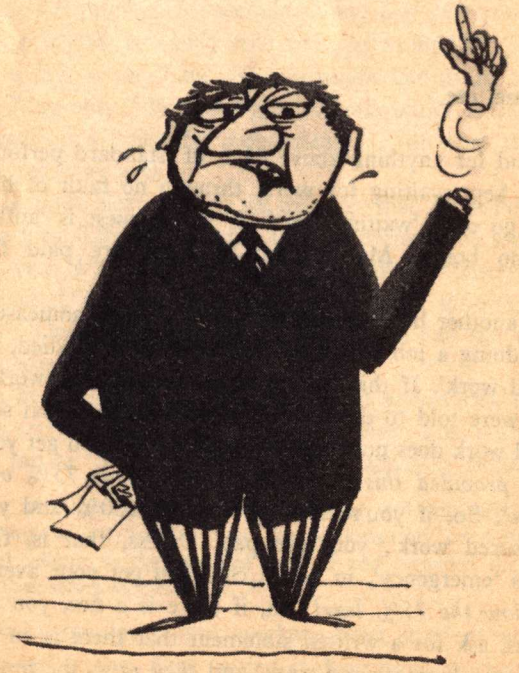
On the other hand, you get average bonus without qualification for 'Diverted time'. This money is given for *approved* attendances at works committees, local advisory committees; *authorised* discussions with the shop steward, and so forth. This raises some nice points for argument. For example, will the time be 'authorised' for arguing whether the time should be 'authorised' or not?

Safety

One very important clause in the agreements will have to be engraved on every shop steward's heart: *Clause 21, Safety:*

'21.1 Standard times established allow for the requirements of all safety regulations.
21.2 If an employee ignores safety regulations, productivity payments will not be made for the time spent by the men on the job concerned'.

It is well-known that the spread of productivity deals in Britain has been associated with a general rise in the level of industrial accidents. The employers' pressure for more speed-up has had serious effects on industrial safety. Despite the employers' protestations, the same could happen in the supply industry, unless the shop stewards are vigilant. No one can claim that the labour force can be cut by up to 50% – as seems possible – without a serious risk of more accidents.



'Accidents? Poppycock!—All left-wing propaganda!'

What is really appalling about the agreement is that it speaks only of financial penalties for *workers* for unsafe working, when the whole emphasis put on productivity dealing *by the employers* stresses cutting corners and risking safety. Faced with productivity deals, the supply shop stewards will have to be even more safety conscious, even more aggressive on the whole question. There are few power stations, in fact, which would pass the serious scrutiny of a trained safety steward for very long. The safety question is important, both in itself, and as a lever for protecting working conditions generally.

Why They Want Work Study

One general point must be made about work study, productivity deals and the like, a point made clearly enough by the CEGB document (Part A, para 5.7): 'Management will be seeking continuously to improve methods of cooperation with NJIC staff'.

In short, once they have the bit between their teeth, management will want still more redundancies, still more shift-work, still more demarcations down. The work study which is being introduced up and down the country is not the end of the story.

This brings us to another question: is the 'incentive' scheme properly named? The answer must be NO. Under the 1968 scheme, a worker will be paid the top rate of bonus for a performance level, called 'standard performance', which scores 100. But a group of workers who 'over-exerted' themselves at all and achieved more than 'standard performance', would score more than 100. *They would not be paid any extra.* The agreement makes this quite clear. The so-called 'incentives' aim to get workers to reach but not surpass a 'natural' level of working the Boards have decided they want.

The real aim of the whole exercise is to use the 'incentive' element to persuade workers to accept a higher work pace and redundancies. Then, when the bosses have 'pruned' the industry severely, they will abandon incentives, once they have done the job they are intended to do.

48 CEGB North West Region, *A guide to productivity payments schemes*, 1970, p. 2.
49 See Tony Cliff, *The Employers' Offensive: Productivity Deals and How to Fight Them*, Pluto Press, 1970, pp. 103-4, for this and other examples.
50 R. Geary, *Work Study Applied to Building*, p. 33.
51 B. Franks, *The Measured Day Work and Productivity Deal Swindle*, 1970, p. 38.
52 British Standards Institution, *A Glossary of Terms in Work Study*, 1959, Spec. 3138.
53 See Tony Cliff, *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

9 Fighting Back

What follows is an attempt to draw some lessons from experience both in supply and other industries of ways in which the fight against work study may be waged. The proposals put forward here must not be treated as a final and unchangeable set of demands: rather, they represent some pieces of the experience of workers who have had to fight against work study in the past. We hope they can act as some kind of guide to action, but not as an instant recipe book.

There is no substitute, for any shop steward or works committee members, for close, intensive study of the agreements in the industry. There are many loopholes and points which can be used in fighting against work study. Every shop steward should ensure that he has a copy of every agreement in the industry, and that he knows them inside out.

Mutuality

Time and again in what follows, the idea of 'mutuality' will crop up as a central principle in a whole number of demands. This is an idea which is so important that it needs discussing in general.

'Mutuality' or 'the right to bargain' is the key to the defeat of the employers' pay and productivity schemes. Fundamentally, what it means is that nothing can happen – on job mobility, manning, work measurement, grading, safety, etc, – without the agreement of the workers themselves, their works committee and shop steward representatives. All items are open to negotiation. As one writer put it, 'The demand for "mutuality" strikes a dagger at the heart of a productivity deal'.[54] What mutuality gives is a very tiny degree of control over production to the workers and their representatives, and therefore limits management's power to do as it likes.

The importance of mutuality has been recognised by the employers and the Government for a long time. The supply industry bosses have

tried to build in all kinds of national controls, to restrict the degree of mutuality in work study. And, most important, they extracted from the unions the infamous clause 202 of the 1967 Agreement, which gave them the right 'to make any changes the Boards think necessary'.

Yet, in practice, the employers – even though they have won this concession from the unions on paper – dare not exercise their 'right' *completely*. For instance, they have to maintain a certain degree of safety standards, and they have to recognise the role of the shop stewards and works committee members here. Again, the very fact that they recognise the right of the unions to maintain 100% trade unionism in the industry means that they concede to the unions, however loosely, the right to engage in *some* negotiation. So the question we have to ask about 'mutuality' is not *whether* it can be forced on the employers, even after the Clause 202 sell-out, but *how much* mutuality can be forced on them even now. In our view, the motto of the militant shop steward should be 'The Sky's the Limit'.

It is vital that, where stewards are faced with the necessity of actually fighting the work study men, they force the acceptance of 'mutuality'. It cannot be taken for granted, for the employers will pretend that work study is 'neutral' and 'scientific'. They will make out that there can be no argument about work study. Needless to say, no steward should accept this guff. The work study men exist to be *fought*.

In the short run, of course, there will be many defeats, not so much often at power station and depot level as at the next stage up. For when a disputed issue comes before the DJIC or NJIC, the full-time officials, if they run true to current form, will often accept management's defienition of Clause 202. But even in defeats the principle of 'mutuality' must be constantly asserted, and re-asserted, on every conceivable issue. Only in this way can real trade unionism be maintained and developed on the job, and the industry's workers be fully educated into the realities of the productivity deals. To assert 'mutuality' in a defeat, after all, is to say that we live to fight another day.

Counter-Demands

The crucial job is to develop counter-demands which make sense to the workers but are poison to management. Management must be made to show, in practice, what they are after. Management must be

faced with a set of demands which the workers have adopted as a pre-condition for even discussing management proposals. In electricity supply, these might include the following:

(1) A guarantee of no redundancy or run-down of the labour force, no plant closure for a specified period into the future (say, ten years).

(2) Consolidation of union rights at work. If this is not already guaranteed, stewards must have full freedom of movement, at all times, throughout the plant. Management must grant workers the right to hold meetings, as and when they want them, on full pay.

(3) No changes in working conditions, including manning, without full agreement from the shop stewards.

(4) No part of any agreement to come into force unless and until all parts of the agreement have been *separately* voted on by all the workers. We must resist the kind of 'package voting' involved in the lead-in payments meetings, where one vote decided both more money and general acceptance of work-study and a rundown of labour.

(5) Stewards to have the right to invite in any 'experts' with whom they wish to consult, at all times. These 'experts' might be union officials (not necessarily from the steward's own union), local militants from other plant or other industries, etc. (After all, since the bosses are always bringing in their 'management consultants', why shouldn't the stewards?).

(6) Where shifts are worked, management to set aside at least a day a month, on full pay, for general meetings of workers at the station or depot, for stewards from different shifts to meet, etc. Manning must be sufficient to permit this.

(7) Management to make available to stewards all documents and plans for the station or depot, and for the region. The CEGB, for instance, has Regional Plans which it keeps a close-guarded secret. These no doubt include projections of the number of workers the bosses think will be employing in five years' time, the plant they think they will close, etc. Also, there are work-study specifications and other documents which management keep closely guarded from the stewards' scrutiny.

In fact, if the management were to accept these demands, a lot of the pay and productivity scheme's teeth would be drawn. It is to their lasting discredit that the unions made no such demands at national level when the management started talks on Pay and Productivity. As it is, the capitulation to the employers at national level leaves the stewards much weaker. But even if the local management turns the demands down, they will clearly have shown to the workers that they are out to weaken trade unionism, and to create further unemployment.

Many stewards acted along these lines when lead-in payments were proposed in the stations and depots up and down the country in the spring of 1971. In a number of cases, even though the stewards lost the vote, the workers' reactions was delayed but nonetheless strong. At one station in Manchester, for example, within three months of the acceptance of lead-in payments the men were circulating a petition demanding the end of lead-in pay and work study. In other words, a vital point in productivity deals is that losing a battle is not the same as losing a war – the main point is to keep up the fight.

Losing the first stage of the battle is not a reason for giving up. For one thing, the first stage was lost as long ago as 1967, when the unions accepted the agreement in general. Nor is losing the lead-in payments vote by any means the end of the fight, even though many shop stewards and workers were very dispirited at the results in the spring and summer of 1971.

Of course, those stations and depots which turned down lead-in payments should keep up their fighting position, and spread the message to other places. Slowly but surely, the day-to-day experience of work study and the productivity schemes is turning more and more workers bitterly against them. Those who feel isolated today will be the leaders of tomorrow. In large number of stations and depots, however, work-study has been accepted in principle, and the work-study men are coming in. This is a time which presents the shop stewards with tremendous difficulties, but also great opportunities.

Work-Study Men

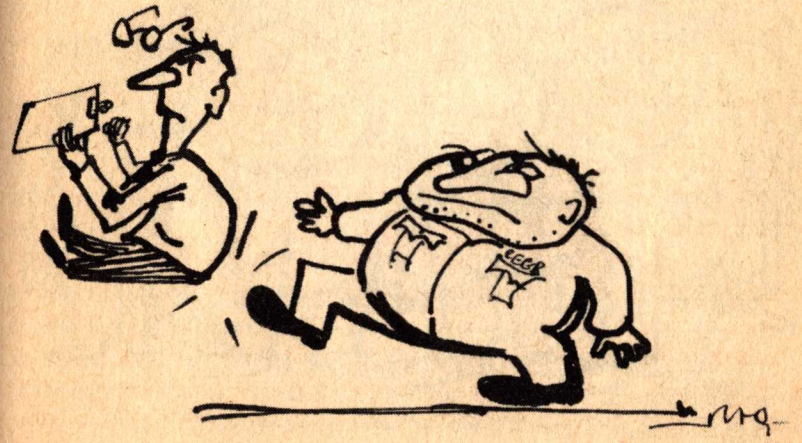
For many workers, the work study man is a new phenomenon, and they are not sure how they should react to him. This is a topic we must clarify briefly.

In a number of areas, 'work study observers' are appointed by management from the shop floor. These men are sometimes selected after a brief test of their ability to do sums, then sent off on a short course. When they come back, they get foremen's pay and join the management team. Some are promised permanent jobs with management if they do well. Over them are work-study officers who have been with management for some time, and who may or may not have received rather more training.

These work-study personnel, in many cases, are caught between two fires in the power industry. They have come up from the shop floor, yet they now work for management. In some cases work-study men retain their union loyalties: they are active in their union branches, remain friendly with their former mates on the shop floor, and some even elect their own shop stewards. Yet at the same time, they are now management's men. In no sense, even if they were elected by the shop floor in the first place, are they shop floor representatives, nor can they be recalled by the shop floor. In fact their position is full of contradictions.

These contradictions must be exploited to the full. There can be no doubt what attitude workers and stewards must take towards work-study men, whoever they are and wherever they have come from: they must be *fought*.

If the work-study man is not a member of the same union as the workers he is supervising, they should refuse to work with him. If he steps out of line on any question, his conduct should be reported to the steward and the union branch, and he should be disciplined by the union. If he refuses to accept this discipline, he should be removed, if necessary expelled from the union: at which point the workers can refuse to work with him. In the author's view, though this is not yet the practice in most unions, work-study men, like foremen and supervisors, should be ineligible to hold office in a union, at branch or district level.

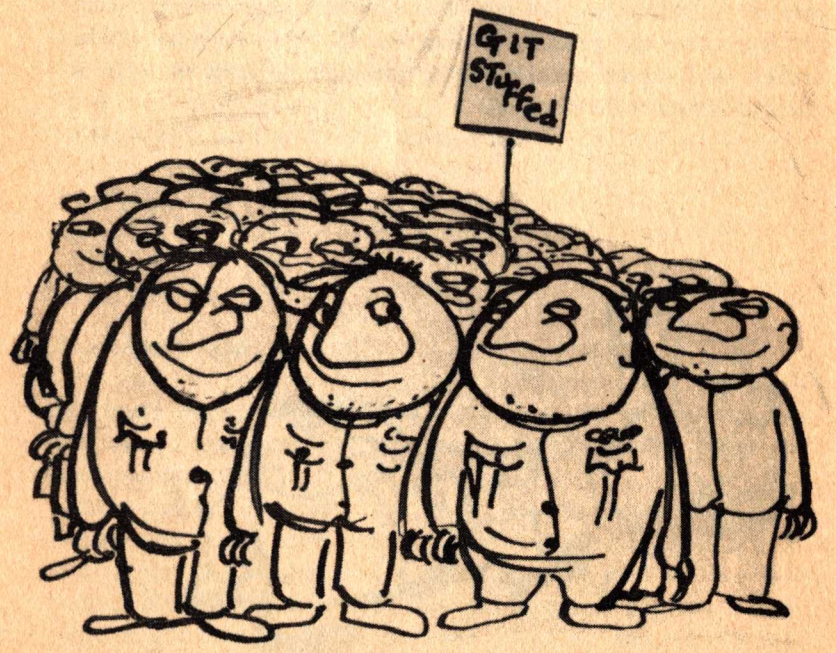


Treat Work Study men properly

Meetings

It is not uncommon for the bosses to organise works committee and other meetings on days when some of the workers' representatives are on night shift. Then either the workers' side is depleted, or their representatives are tired and cannot concentrate properly. This practice should be stamped out. If stewards are required to attend a meeting, on a shift other than their own, they should be taken off their normal shift for that occasion in the interests of health and safety. It is not, of course, a good principle for stewards to work continuously under different conditions from their fellow workers, for management can use this to foment discontent and division among the workers. No steward can afford to be separated from his members. If management want meetings with night-shift stewards, let *them* come on nights.

At work-study meetings, management should never be allowed to dominate numerically or psychologically. If there are four stewards at



Don't let them get a psychological advantage . . .

the meeting, management should not have more than four representatives whether these representatives are called 'superintendents', 'work-study observers', 'consultants' or whatever. No one at such a meeting is ever 'neutral' or 'just observing'. In addition, workers' representatives should never allow management or work-study men to 'blind them with science'. This is one of the oldest management tricks in the book: a simple idea is wrapped up in jargon, and the steward who doesn't understand all the fancy talk feels embarrassed to say he doesn't understand, and accepts what is proposed. Stewards should go on the offensive, and accuse the management of deliberately making things difficult. Nothing that is not blindingly simple should be accepted. A shop steward who is 'clever' is dangerous, too: the management love the situation where only they and the shop stewards understand what has been agreed, while the blokes on the shop floor are in a fog.

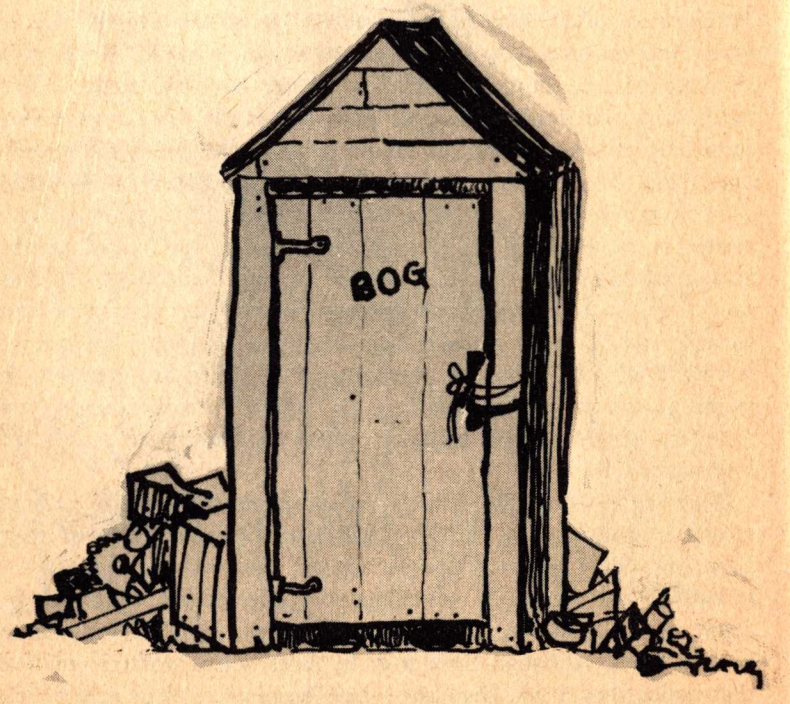
Procedure

Management often delay putting workers' grievances through procedure. One reason is that the individual manager would like to give his superiors the impression that he 'never has any trouble'. The result, from the workers' point of view, is that the delay costs money or endangers safety. Stewards should demand an agreed and speedy time limit for putting questions through procedure, and should demand rapid handling of matters at all levels. Further, when any matter is in dispute, they should demand that the *status quo* be maintained until the dispute is settled to their satisfaction. In this way, they can firstly force management to speed up procedure, and secondly can prevent management using the 'de facto' method of solving a dispute: thus, if management demands an alteration in manning, and the *status quo* rule is not applied, then by the time the dispute is settled the new manning system may have been established in practice.

There is, in the supply industry, an agreement that if strike or other action is planned, the workers must give advance notice of their intentions. This operates, always, against the workers' interests, as it enables the employers to reduce the effectiveness of action by planning ahead for it, and by making anti-union propaganda of various kinds. Although there may be cases where workers will feel that notice should be given (eg to help hospitals, etc) in general this kind of rule should be ended.

Work Study

When work study is to be carried out, the work study department will want to select workers to assess and time. Which workers get chosen for this is quite important, for statistical studies have shown that the difference between the fastest and the slowest worker can be of the order of five to one! Shop stewards should therefore insist that they and the workers will select workers to be studied. Again, the work-study department may think that measuring one worker is enough: depending on the circumstances, stewards should be ready to challenge this ruling, and demand that more workers be measured too. (After all, if he has nothing to do, the work-study men himself might become redundant . . .)



Personal Needs . . .

All timings and job descriptions should be treated as negotiable. Even if a timing or job description has been accepted, and later turns out to be unsatisfactory, it must be open to re-negotiation. Under no circumstances must the work-study department's timings be accepted as 'scientific', etc. The rating that time-study men give individual workers is open to dispute, as is every other stage of the process. When a time for a job is suggested by the work-study department, workers should be discouraged from giving a reply immediately. Given time, they may see the flaws in the timing which they would miss if they had to reply at once. Demand as much time as you need to make up your mind.

All job descriptions should include good margins for personal allowances, fatigue, etc. The fact that the Boards have published data on these (eg 5% for 'personal needs') is quite irrelevant. They can perfectly well be treated as negotiable. A reasonable starting point would be to demand a minimum of 40 minutes per 8 hours, apart from tea breaks and meal breaks, for personal needs, and with difficult jobs a higher allowance. Very adequate safety margins must be built in, as a matter of course. No timing or job descriptions should be applied until agreed.

Waiting time and unmeasured time must be paid at average bonus, whatever the management documents say. There is no reason why a worker who is waiting for work, or doing something the work-study department have not measured, should lose money. All job records must be available for inspection. Timing and work measurement should never be carried out unless a shop steward is present.

Comparative Estimating and 'Averaging'

There are a couple of tricks beloved of work-study men. The first is called 'comparative estimating'. In practice, properly conducted work study is very expensive, in both money and time. Therefore, the work study departments have looked for ways to cut corners. What they propose is taking a number of jobs which *have* been measured, and are all similar in type (say, work on electric motors). These jobs are termed 'benchmarks' and are set out on a 'spread sheet' which is divided into 'time bands'. One time band might cover jobs with times allowed from 15 to 45 minutes, the next band jobs from 45 to 90 minutes, and so on. When all these benchmark jobs have been entered up on the electric motors spread sheet, they then look at a

new job, compare it with the benchmark jobs and bung the new job into one of the time bands. They allow the average time for that time band: so, if a job is plopped into the 15-45 minute band, it gets 30 minutes. The Boards admit that this is not very precise, and that some jobs will get longer times and some shorter times than they need. What they do *not* mention, however, is that if workers save time on a job that is given 'too much' time, they cannot earn more than the top rate of bonus, while on the jobs with 'too little' time the workers will *lose* money. Comparative estimating must mean a loss of money, overall.

Stewards should therefore refuse to accept comparative estimating, and demand full time-study, with full negotiating rights all the way through, on every job.

Work study men have another dodge, called 'averaging', or the 'swings and roundabouts' trick. Say a worker is re-setting meters in domestic premises. Some jobs will take longer, because access is more difficult, etc, and some will take less time. The work-study departments tend to argue for an 'average', so workers will sometimes work faster and sometimes slower than 'average'. The stewards should demand that the most difficult job is taken as the standard. The electricity bosses exploit their workers quite enough without any 'swings and roundabouts' too. Again, the crucial point is mutuality: all these matters must be negotiable.

Standard Performance

The definition of 'standard performance' used by the Boards makes out that this is the level of work to be expected under normal circumstances. Therefore, any group of workers who are not earning 100% bonus have a strong case for fighting the management. No steward will accept that his workers are working less than normally: the fault in the situation is clearly the work-study department's. In such a situation, all the work must be re-assessed and re-timed, and back pay in compensation demanded. This already needs to be done in many power stations and Area Boards, where workers have *not* been regularly earning 100%. The management should not be allowed to get off this hook: they chose the definition, and it is up to the shop stewards to make sure that they stick by it. In fact, the proper use of that vague but useful definition of 'standard performance' ought to give stewards the chance to blunt the teeth of the pay and productivity schemes quite a bit.

The CEGB's North Western management have admitted, in fact, that low productivity is management's fault:

> 'Activity sampling exercises carried out at power stations and on transmission work have confirmed the results found in other Regions and industry at large: when men are working, they generally work well. Productivity is mostly lost through wasted time, not through slacking on the job'.[55]

There is no reason why management should not repeatedly have their own words read out to them. . . .

Flexibility

Under the 'flexibility' clauses of the pay and productivity schemes, the management claim the right to move workers about as it suits them, both within a particular station or depot and between them.

This enables them to manage with less workers and also to victimise militants.

The reasons they want flexibility are illustrated in the June 1971 issue of the CEGB regional paper, *North West Power*. There Agecroft 'C' power station is reported as undergoing a £150,000 overhaul. The station's normal complement of fitters is 144, but a further 15 fitters were drafted in from Carrington, Chadderton, Hartshead and Kearsley power stations. in the same region, fitters were imported in to overhaul the No. 1 unit at Fiddlers' Ferry station, from Westwood, Lister Drive, Connah's Quay and Carrington stations. In this way, management gets the job done more quickly, without having to hire extra men.

Stewards should demand that in future no labour can be moved within or between sites, without agreement. This agreement must be won from the workers who are asked to move, the workers they are leaving and the workers they are joining. Any worker who is transferred must be guaranteed average earnings, either of his old section or his new, whichever is the higher. In particular, shop stewards must not be moved without agreement, since moving a shop steward means a threat to the union organisation. Full account must be taken of the need to re-train workers who are moved, at management's expense, especially in all matters concerning safety. In the event of disagreement on any of these matters, the 'status quo' must be maintained until the dispute is settled. Where regular movement of workers is wanted, as with fitters, etc, jobs away should be taken on rotation or some other basis which the workers themselves decide is fair. All travelling and out-of-pocket expenses and full

overtime rates must be paid for any time spent travelling in excess of normal working hours.

There should be no reduction in the **overall** manning level through mobility of labour. If a fitter is being moved to another power station, who is covering his work? How is safety going to be affected by his absence?

Shift Work

There is obviously a strong case for *some* shift work in the power industry, as there is for weekend working. The social life of the community, its health and welfare, depend to a great extent on the continuous provision of electricity. But this is not a case for supporting the existing set-up in the supply industry. For one thing, in the power stations, shift workers are on rotating shifts. As a number of studies have shown, this form of shift work is the one most likely to lead to various kinds of physical and mental complaints: sleep patterns, eating habits, even bowel movements tend to be disturbed when no regular pattern of work and sleep is followed. Family and social life too is especially disturbed.[56] There is no reason whatever why the present shift system, with weekly rotation of shifts, should be followed, except that it suits the employers. Workers could usefully study the question, and decide for themselves which system they would prefer to work. Shift-workers should in any case, of course, be compensated for their service to the community by greatly reduced total working hours per week – a matter to which we must return.

Shift-work also threatens union organisation in the work place, for it becomes difficult to get a meeting of all the shop stewards at one time. An important demand, therefore, is that management should put aside at least a day a month for the stewards of all shifts to meet together, on full pay.

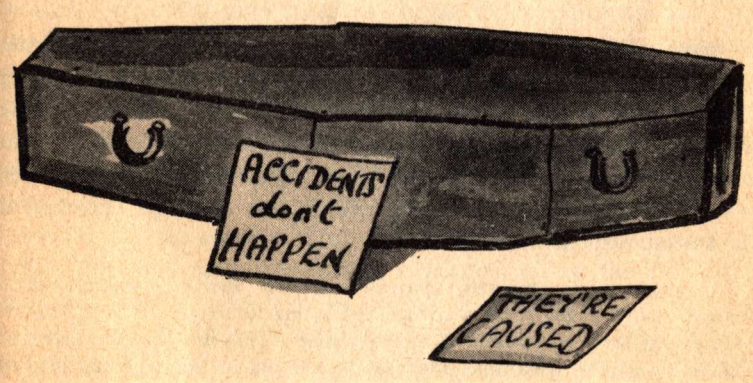
On all shifts, needless to say, stewards should demand that all services are made available, such as canteens, medical and welfare services, etc.

Safety

Over the last few years, the general level of accidents has risen in British industry. Safety is a question of vital importance in all aspects of negotiations, especially where pay and productivity schemes are

concerned. For the danger of accidents can only increase when less men are being required to work faster. At all stages in work study, there are a multitude of issues which need to be raised in connection with safety. Nothing which might even conceivably be unsafe must be allowed to pass, under any circumstances. For the conditions of work which are written into job descriptions may have to be accepted for a very long time.

This often means that when work study is actually carried out a large range of management's equipment and tools must be scrapped and replaced. Unless this is done, job descriptions must be refused. The agreements state that timings and job descriptions must take account of safety, and further that workers who ignore safe working practices will lose their bonus. Every job description must, therefore, include the very last word in safety. As every militant worker knows, there are many work arrangements which would be passed by management, even by the Government's factory inspectors, and which are still potentially dangerous. Under no circumstances can they be permitted.



Safety is a prime bargaining weapon, given to shop stewards and works committee members in the agreements, and it must be used to its furthest possible extent, to maintain manning levels and improve working conditions. All unsafe or even uncomfortable working arrangements (eg a worker having to stoop to get at something) must not be *compensated,* but *stopped*. Safety officers from the shop floor must be elected by the workers – ideally they should be shop stewards – and given the best training available at management expense. Each shop steward, works committee member and safety

officer should be given a personal copy of a standard work of reference like Redgrave's *Factory Acts*, which he should be trained to use and understand. (This book is beyond the buying power of workers in the industry.) All complaints on safety should be fully minuted. A national list of accidents in the industry should be published, in detail, every three months, circulated to all safety committees and shop stewards, and be available for inspection at all times. Safety officers and shop stewards should have the right to inspect all plant at all times. Safety officers should have the right to stop a job at once if there is any doubt about its safety. (At present, not even the Electricity Council's Regional safety officers have this power! All they can do is recommend.) Any recommendation of a factory inspector should be treated as an order to be carried out immediately. Full medical services should be available at all times (including clinics, ambulances, etc). A specified amount of the working time of maintenance workers should be spent on safety problems each week, and records kept of all work done under this heading.

Training

In some cases, the development of pay and productivity schemes involves training programmes for workers. It is already becoming clear that the Boards' intend to get this done on the cheap. Recently the CEGB published an interview with their NW Region head of education and training, describing the new methods of training, using TV and other modern aids, that he was devising. The reasons for his innovations are important:

'. . . productivity payments schemes and new working patterns within stations have brought about a change in training techniques. It is difficult to release men for long periods to attend courses. This is where the packaged courses are a great advantage. Men can be released for short periods at their own location so as not to interfere with working patterns'.[57]

This kind of development needs watching. If a man can be taken off his shift for a couple of hours, and then returned after a bit of 'training', the Board will press to have the shift worked with one man short for that two-hour period. From the safety and manning point of view, this is totally unacceptable. The correct response from stewards is that put forward by the Berkeley power station stewards, who insisted that men must *either* do their normal duties *or* train on a particular shift, but *not both*.[58]

All training must be entirely at the management's expense, with no loss of earnings for the workers involved.

Discipline

In the coming period, the employers are liable to use disciplinary procedures, if all else fails, to force through acceptance of their plans, especially as resistance from the shop floor builds up.

In every plant, there should be posted a written disciplinary procedure, which has been negotiated. Such a procedure should involve the right of appeal, and of representation by shop stewards at all times. Foremen should not be permitted to take action against workers. Nor should any management be allowed to take action against any worker on the grounds of his past record unless the specific circumstances have been recorded and witnessed by the worker concerned. No disciplinary record is to be marked in any way until the full procedure of appeal has been used.

Access to documents

We have already mentioned the fact that in many cases documents which affect negotiations and conditions in the supply industry are kept secret by the employers. It is often difficult, for example, for workers – including shop stewards – to see the specifications for work study, which have been laid out by the Boards in lengthy documents. Again, the Regions of the CEGB, and perhaps the Area Boards too, have recently adopted five-year plans, which they are very reluctant to show shop stewards. Works committee members and shop stewards should demand full and free access to these documents, and wherever they feel it necessary that these documents be available for general inspection by all workers. The employers use their own channels of information and data collection as a weapon against the shop floor, and these channels need to be opened to workers' inspection. For example, the Electricity Council has established a data bank of work standards. This has never been published for the unions. It should be, immediately. Similarly with the 'yardsticks' etc which the Boards are trying to adopt as a measure of work performance. These have been unilaterally adopted – ie, totally without negotiation with the unions – and the employers wish to impose these.

Workers' Democracy

In our history of the last decade, the union leaders' failure to take serious account of their members' interests and wishes in supply

stands out sharply. As a result, the main burden of the fight against pay and productivity dealing has fallen on the stewards. For them, any effective strategy for fighting back must depend on their behaving very differently from the national union leaderships. If the incentive schemes are to be defeated, the majority of the industry's workers must be mobilised in the struggle. This cannot happen if they are alienated from developments by lack of information and, crucially, lack of shop-floor democracy.

Unfortunately, the supply industry has a weak tradition of mass meetings. This weakness will have to be overcome. Even though the steward is a worker like other workers, there is still a real danger of his isolation from his members, a development management would love. The real danger is that workers can become cynical, and be bamboozled by the bosses, if the sharp distinction between management's authoritarian set-up and the democracy of the workers' side is blurred.

We believe all issues should be decided by the shop floor, after discussion at shop-floor meetings. Stewards should never accept or reject schemes on their own authority, for their job is to represent their members but not to decide for them. Management must be made to provide facilities for meetings, in working time. These should be held regularly, especially when work study is being attempted by management. Such meetings must be 'authorised' by management and full bonus allowed.

The supply bosses know the importance of meetings. Back in 1963, the Electricity Council were looking at 'informal work groups', which they have since promoted widely. At 'informal' meetings, often of small work groups, they can undermine resistance and find weak points in workers' organisation. They invite workers, in a 'free and friendly atmosphere', to discuss their problems with management. The Acting Superintendent at Blackburn power station said these discussion groups were 'invaluable during the setting up and introduction of incentive bonus schemes'. And a works committee member at the same station made a most revealing remark on the same subject:

'If anyone has a grievance he can voice it and not leave it to an elected representative who may not really agree with the complaint and so he does not make a strong protest. At an informal meeting a man could have the support of his mates. Mind you, a man is just as likely to be shot down by his mates if they don't agree with him'.[59]

Two things stand out here: first, the situation with the elected representative should be *impossible,* for the steward should fight as hard as he can when workers have decided on an issue; second, the bosses can exploit the divisions revealed between a worker and his

mates in informal groups. Correct union practice should mean that workers discuss *among themselves* their attitude to a particular matter, and arrive at a majority position. They should then mandate their representative to argue their case forcefully. If he doesn't they should elect someone else. The *bosses'* 'informal groups' are a dangerous substitute for *workers'* meetings. This principle affects negotiations in another way too. Often, management spend months working out their proposals, and then put them to workers on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, demanding a decision there and then. That must be stopped. Workers should demand all the time they need to decide. The more time they have to think, the less likely they are to be fooled.

Management also demand acceptance of schemes as 'packages', taking 'good' and 'bad' parts together. There is no reason to accept this procedure. Take the extra cash, chuck out the worsened conditions!

In any case, negotiations should not drag on for long without report-back to the shop floor, the source of the steward's authority.

54 Tony Cliff, *Op. cit.*, p. 221. This is a vital book for any worker wanting to know more about productivity deals. The author acknowledges his debt to this book in much that follows.
55 CEGB North West Region, *Op. cit.*, 1970, p. 5.
56 For details, see Tony Cliff, *Op. cit.*, pp. 68-72, and P. Mott, *Shift Working: the social, psychological and physical consequences,* 1965.
57 *North West Power,* August 1971.
58 National Joint Industrial Council, *Minutes of the 178th meeting,* 20 May 1971.
59 *North West Power,* June 1971.

Moving Forward

10

Up to now we have discussed the defensive, immediate struggle to resist the implementation of the pay and productivity schemes in the supply industry. We must now look at the ways in which power workers must begin to move on the offensive. The following demands seem to us to be a reasonable beginning to a programme of demands for supply workers to press for in their unions, and to organise to fight for.

1. There must be no more productivity concessions in the supply industry, no more 'Joint Statements of Employee Cooperation' or other wedges for the employers to hammer home.
2. The existing agreements must be re-negotiated and destroyed. All clauses permitting management to organise labour as it thinks fit and to run down the labour force must be struck out of the agreements.
3. There must be a large-scale cut in working hours in the entire industry, to compensate workers for shift-work, the existing productivity deals, and the effects of technological development. A minimum target should be the 35-hour week without overtime, and with no loss of real earnings.
4. A cost-of-living bonus, whereby earnings are automatically raised with each rise in the cost of living, must be won.
5. All laws restricting the right of supply workers to strike or take other industrial action, including the Industrial Relations Act of 1971 and the Electricity Acts, must be thrown out.
6. The training of young workers for the future must be greatly increased, instead of being sharply reduced as at present. The conditions of apprenticeship must be greatly improved, with better pay scales for young workers, banning of all workers under 21 from shift work, full chances to get all-round education and training, and removal of all restrictions on the rights of young workers to strike or take other industrial action.

All of this is a necessary minimum set of demands for power workers. But the demands cannot be achieved without a radical reorganisation of the trade-union structure in the industry. For time and again, the rank and file have found themselves being blocked by their own unions. The central problem is that of trade-union democracy. Without that, all the resolutions and demands that can be imagined will be worthless, for union officials can ignore them and negotiate further agreements that lead to more loss of jobs, demoralisation and weakening of the trade-union movement in the supply industry.

There are four unions now organising NJIC members in the supply industry: the EETU-PTU, the NUGMW, the AUEW and the T & GWU. Of these, the first two are commonly regarded as 'right wing' and the latter two as 'left wing', not because of their membership's attitudes as much as because of the policies their leaderships generally advocate.

The ETU

The EETU-PTU is made up, as its name suggests, from a merger between the old ETU (electricians) and the PTU (plumbers). The section of the union which concerns us here is the old ETU. This union saw a drastic change in its leadership in 1961 as a result of a prolonged High Court action involving charges of ballot-rigging. As a result, the existing executive committee, which had been influenced by Communist Party ideas, was ousted and a new executive took its place. This new executive has been very much more right wing in its political and industrial attitudes.

What is ironic about the history of the ETU in the 1960s and early 1970s is that an executive and group of national officers, who originally came to power in the name of 'democracy', have campaigned, with considerable success, to reduce the democratic power of the rank and file over union policy, to the point where the EETU-PTU today is a byword among trade unionists for its authoritarian structure.

The new executive, elected shortly after the High Court case, moved quite rapidly to consolidate their position in the union, sacking the Assistant General Secretary, McLennan, invalidating a number of the previous executive's rule changes, and calling a new Rules Revision conference. They did not get their own way immediately: proposals to extend the period between executive elections from two to five years were solidly defeated. The right wing temporarily withdrew proposals for making membership of the executive a full-time position

and, instead, launched an extensive campaign up to the 1965 Rules Revision conference, where the following changes were introduced by a small majority:

(1) a full-time executive council, to be elected every five years;
(2) abolition of the rank-and-file Area Committees;
(3) power to the executive to close branches and amalgamate others under a full-time branch officer; and
(4) removal of the right of appeal by branches against EC decisions.

In 1962, a rank and file Appeals Committee was established by the new executive, but in 1969 was abolished again by the executive. In place of the rank and file appeals court, the Executive is now judge, jury and prosecutor, since half the executive constitutes the disciplinary committee and the other half the appeals court! Conference actually turned this down, but it was pushed through with an individual ballot among the membership, who were not properly informed of the case against. The ballot was likewise used to dispose of the elected trustees. Since 1969, all full-time officers have been appointed by the executive. Communist Party members are banned from holding office, including the 'office' of conference delegate.

From 1962, industrial conferences were introduced into the union's constitution. In theory, this should have meant a step towards greater democracy, but in practice has not, since the conferences can be ignored. Thus, the 1970 conference in contracting was effectively declared null and void by Bro. Hammond of the union executive, who declared in the union journal *Contact* that

'. . . the Executive were not going to pay any attention to resolutions adopted by the Industrial Conference in the contracting industry'.

Members who have stood in opposition to the executive in elections have had a mysterious habit of being expelled or victimised or otherwise declared ineligible to stand. They do not have the right to present their views to the membership without hindrance. In addition, the union's press has been closed to the expression of views opposed to those of the executive. The authoritarianism of the ETU was clearly shown in August 1968 when union members demonstrated at their union headquarters wearing masks for fear of victimisation.

ETU policy, in recent years, has often been one of open collaboration with the employers, as in the case of the notorious agreement that set up the Joint Industry Board (JIB) in the electrical contracting industry. In addition, the ETU has given strong support to work study, which is now being used as a scourge of the supply workers. In their evidence to the Donovan Commission, the ETU leadership spoke proudly of the joint union and management courses they had

organised for such employers as ICI, the Greater London Council, Fairfields, BOAC, BEA and the British Rail workshops. They waxed quite poetic about the subject:

'At trade union local level there is still the fear of the past and of being brainwashed for the future. But the need (for work study) is a real one, and it must be satisfied. The ETU is eager and able to satisfy that need. What it requires is cooperation from a much wider range of employers than has yet been willing to cooperate'.

'Now you all know me brothers'

The late Sir Les Cannon, who died during the work to rule in 1970, was once a trade-union militant. In 1955 he wrote of work study that it is 'an instrument being used by the monopolies in the drive for maximum profit. It does not give increases in earnings proportionate to increases in productivity.'

But as President of the ETU, he sounded a very different tune. He justified work study in the power industry with most conservative arguments. Thus Cannon addressed ETU officials meeting to discuss work study in the supply industry:

'. . . if there had been no incentive scheme, it would not have affected the manning levels that will be established in power stations coming on stream in 1973. We would merely have these manning levels without incentive payments'.[60]

He did not mention an alternative: using workers' militancy to get a serious cut in the working week, to maintain staffing levels. Yet this is the realistic alternative to work study and redundancy, which shifts the burden of modernisation off the backs of the industry's employees.

Whatever ETU members think of their leaders' views, however, they have very little power in the union's current constitution to change them. And that is the problem.

The GMWU

The General and Municipal Workers' Union has been a reactionary, undemocratic, right-wing union for many years. GMWU officials are appointed first, and elected later: an officer is put on probationary service, on appointment, for two years, and 'on completion of his or her probationary service . . . shall contest an election'. These 'elections' are never lost – indeed, one District Committee has several times proposed the ending of these elections because they are a farce. Once elected, a GMWU official is in for life – a system that was introduced in 1926 after a former General Secretary had to face opposition when he stood for re-election. Though he retained his job with a 90 per cent majority, the fact of re-election was felt to be enough of an indignity for the system to be abandoned. The EC member who proposed the change stated:

'The provision of compelling officials to seek election was democracy run mad and a farce'.[61]

No one may even stand for office unless the NEC 'is satisfied that he or she is capable of discharging efficiently the duties of the office'. Branches can be closed down or merged by the District Secretary, and branch officers can be removed from above (but not from below!). There are strict rules forbidding public criticism of the union or its policies, or association with bodies the union does not like. The NEC has a built-in majority of full-time officials.

The union is one big happy family, as the following illustrations show: Lord Cooper, the present General Secretary, is the son of a lady from the family of Lord Dukes, GMWU General Secretary in the 1920s and 1930s. Cooper's predecessor in office, Lord Williamson, was nephew of a Liverpool District Secretary. David Basnett, the national official of the union who cut such a shocking figure during the 1970 Pilkington strike, is the son of a Liverpool District Organiser who was himself the son of a Manchester official!

The GMWU'S lack of democracy goes along well with its industrial record. It made a special point of boasting to the Donovan Commission about how little it had spent on strike benefit since 1926. From 1958 to 1964 its average annual expenditure on strike pay was only £17,500 – less than it spent on officials' cars! It has signed 'sweetheart' agreements with employers, exchanging 100 per cent trade

unionism and the check-off system (in other words, a guaranteed income without effort) for policing agreements for the employers. Members who have taken unofficial action have been disciplined under such agreements.

The union has an excellent record for strike-breaking, as at Pilkingtons, Fords, Linwood, BOAC, and Shell-Mex, and other places. Lord Cooper told his fellow peers in the House of Lords that 'no unofficial strike is ever justified'.

Recently, however, particularly since the Pilkington strike, the union has been shaken to some extent out of its bureaucratic torpor by the waves of militancy among lower-paid workers. This is shown by the recent rise in dispute benefit paid out by the GMWU:

1967 — £17,700
1968 — £84,000
1969 — £107,000
1970 — £713,000

In fact, in 1970, the GMWU spent more on strike pay than the entire British trade union movement spent in 1963! This does not, of course, mean that the GMWU leadership is any less of an impediment to workers' advance than it was a few years ago. Simply, the tempo of the industrial battle has hotted up, and the leadership has had to adjust if it is not to lose control entirely – just as the unions preferred to have an official work to rule in December 1970 than 'lose control' entirely to the rank and file.

The TGWU

The Transport and General Workers' Union has a reputation as a 'militant' and 'left wing' union. This is not by any means entirely deserved. Much of the union's industrial record mirrors that of the GMWU and ETU. During the Barbican strike, for example, an advert appeared in the national press signed by officials of the TGWU, AUBTW, ASW and NFBTO, along with management, stating:

'There is no strike at the Barbican site. The site is open and trade union members are free to work there with the support of the trade unions.'

The 'militancy' of the union dates from the time that Frank Cousins came to the union's head in the mid-1950s, largely by accident. Before that the TGWU was notorious for its right-wing regime, which engaged in hunting out 'reds' more than fighting the employers. London busmen and Northern dockers tried to break away from the union in disgust. Cousins, and his successor Jack Jones, have responded to some degree to the increase in rank-and-file militancy, but this should not be exaggerated. Glasgow busmen were so fed-up with the TGWU

in the mid-1960s that they tried to form a breakaway union, and Indian and Pakistani workers at Courtaulds in Preston talked of this when they got no support for their strike against de-manning. At Woolfs rubber factory in Southall, in 1966, workers were given no support by the local officials in a strike to defend union organisation, and though their strike was 'official', received no strike pay.

The union deprecated the activities of the rank and file Joint Sites Committee in the London building industry, stating that the 'unofficial activities . . . had done only harm to the trade union movement, weakening the authority of the national executives and officials'.

The TGWU was regarded as 'left wing' partly because it opposed 'incomes policy' under the Labour Government. However, it opposed incomes policy in the name of pay and productivity deals. Until quite recently, in fact, the TGWU leadership was openly in favour of these deals. On the buses, in the docks and elsewhere, TGWU members have little to thank their union for in this respect. In the fight to get phase one of the Devlin scheme into the docks, for instance, the union's officials worked harder than the bosses, employing 'flying squads' to travel round the docks explaining the attractive parts of the scheme, while collaborating with the bosses in publication of a new paper, *The Port,* which was used to make propaganda in favour of the Devlin scheme for redundancy and productivity.

Recently the TGWU leadership has muted its public support for productivity deals, because of the rise in unemployment. The leadership has tended to oppose these deals in public, on platforms, while signing them in the background. Thus there was not a squeak from the leadership against the 'Wilberforce' recommendations, though these aimed explicitly to cut the number of jobs in the supply industry.

The TGWU is not a paragon of democracy, either. Jack Jones, the General Secretary, is in for life. Its members in the supply industry are no more in control of their negotiators than they are in the GMWU and ETU.

The AUEW

The AUEW, the fourth union, is a semi-federal body made up of a number of previously distinct unions, including the AEU, the section which organises in the supply industry. Like Jack Jones of the TGWU, the AEU president, Hugh Scanlon and a majority of the executive are regarded as 'left'. In practice their position tends to be contradictory. On the one hand, Scanlon organised official one-day

strikes against the Tory Industrial Relations Bill, yet on the other he over-ruled the Paisley District Committee's opposition to productivity bargaining at the Linwood car plant in 1968. Every AEU card asks members 'to use every exertion to obtain work for our unemployed and so lighten the burden of all', yet the union's negotiators on the NJIC accepted the Wilberforce proposals which meant a serious cut in the industry's labour force.

Bob Wright, who leads the AEU team on the NJIC, told the union's delegate meeting in August 1970 that the unions hold 'a philosophy . . . of more control at plant levels with a greater involvement and communication' yet that they are 'obliged to accept our responsibilities to the National Agreement and all that is involved'. The union thus rides two horses. The officials will oppose redundancy and productivity dealing to their stewards when the occasion demands, yet use the fact that they are a minority on the NJIC as an excuse for going along with agreements like the post-Wilberforce one. As for breaking away from the NJIC set-up, that is 'impossible' because of the Electricity Acts and because the employers 'would never recognise us'.

Of all the unions in the NJIC, the AEU is the most democratic, but this does not mean the situation is beyond criticism. There have been a number of delegate conferences in recent years, but the way the delegates are selected leaves much to be desired: in 1971 a work-study man was sent as a delegate from one division, by the official. It is unusual in the AEU for power workers or their stewards to be able to elect their delegates to such conferences directly, or to control what they say or how they vote.

Both the AUEW and TGWU provide the militant steward with an environment which is a little more favourable than the ETU or GMWU. But this is no cause for complacency. In every union there are demands which need to be pressed for very hard.

Union Democracy

Space prevents a full discussion of the demands proposed below. They are put forward as a basis for discussion among supply industry militants.

Negotiations

There must be no secret negotiations. At all stages negotiations must be subject to ratification by rank-and-file conferences made up of delegates elected from all unions and sections of the industry. Officials must be bound by these conference decisions. Full minutes of all

must be bound by these conference decisions. Full minutes of all negotiations, with voting records, should be circulated throughout the industry.

Union Conferences
In every union, conferences of elected delegates should be held annually. The Standing Orders Committee should be made up of elected lay delegates.

Union Officials
All officials, paid and unpaid, must be elected and subject to recall. Paid officials should get the average wage in their industry. Policy-making bodies should be made up of elected lay delegates only. Any educational qualifications or political disqualifications for union office should be abolished. Members standing for election should have the right to have election addresses circulated without alteration.

Appeals and Disciplinary Committees
Only lay members should be eligible to stand for election to these.

100 Per Cent Trade Unionism
The agreement on 100 per cent trade unionism must be maintained, especially now the Industrial Relations Act threatens it. Trade unionists should defend their right to discipline workers who flout majority decisions.

Individual Rights
All members must have the unfettered right to criticise union policy. They must be guaranteed the right to meet 'unofficially', to visit other branches and stewards' committees, to communicate with the press and to circularise political literature. Open access to the union's appeal machinery must be guaranteed. All members must have equal rights to pay the same contributions and receive the same benefits, and to stand for all union offices.

Combine Committees
Supply workers must build effective combine committees of shop stewards from all unions in all areas, and link them nationally. Since the advent of productivity dealing, the need for such committees has become more pressing. The only effective counter to the 'divide and rule' tactics of the employers is combine organisation, to provide a flow of information and to organise support for local disputes. Combine committees can also play an important role in the battle for union

democracy, for without strong rank-and-file organisation, independent of the official machinery, the unions will be free to continue to sell members' jobs and conditions.

Links with White-collar Workers
Much stronger links with the white-collar workers in the industry are needed. Often NJIC workers are inhibited by a heritage of suspicion about clerical and technical workers, but in fact these workers too, are coming under similar attacks to the manual side.

NALGO members on the clerical side are threatened by the growth of their own form of 'productivity schemes', which go under the name of 'clerical work measurement'. This is even more 'unscientific' than work study, and does not even have an incentive element as 'compensation', yet their union officials have treated it, so far, with amazing complacency. These workers are also threatened by the Government's plans for selling off the electricity show-rooms to private industry. As profits in the showrooms amount to £4½ millions a year, private business would love to get hold of them. Already some gas showrooms have been sold off. In electricity, up to 20,000 jobs are threatened by this development.[62]

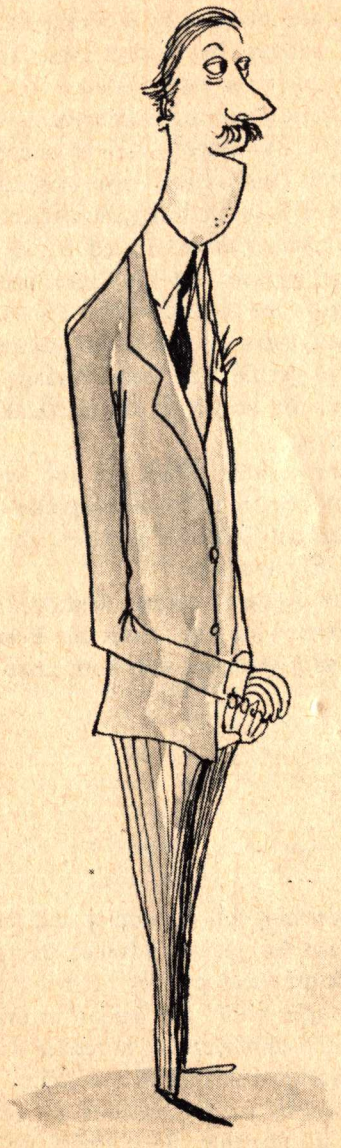
Technicians in the far from militant EPEA are also experiencing widespread redundancy. Often they are made to reorganise their work in line with the manual workers' incentive schemes, though most receive no financial or other compensation.

Both groups of white-collar workers – neither directly involved in the 'bossing' side of management – are thus under the Boards' hammers. Manual workers' links with them are thus both more necessary and more practicable.

Democracy and Propaganda

The struggle for strong organisation, full democracy and free debate in the unions is a precondition for serious advance by the power workers. At present, the structures and policies of their unions are a brake on progress. The struggle within the unions, at every level, will become sharper the more the employers try to reduce still further the working conditions and living standards of the supply workers. No union constitution, of course, by itself guarantees any real democracy or any advance by the membership. That, from beginning to end, depends on the active involvement of the membership at large. All forms of activity aimed at greater understanding of the current

crisis in the supply industry, and at involving workers in shaping their own future in the industry, must be given close attention and full support.



'Now you lads know you can trust us . . .'

The employers know the importance of propaganda all too well. It is not from charity that they distribute their various newspapers free to all workers in the industry. They seek in every way to influence the minds of workers, and to cover up management's blunders (which are *never* mentioned in their papers!). In every depot and power station, a vital ideological battle goes on every day. The job of the militant trade unionist is to work unceasingly to defeat the insidious spread of management ideas. Against the bosses' attempts to divide and rule, we must pose the solidarity of the supply workers, expressed through democratic control of their unions at all levels. Unity of the various grades, reduction of differentials (in an upward direction, needless to say), reduction of any gap between the stewards and union officers and the rank and file: these are the humdrum, but vital tasks of the militant. The profession of the working-class militant is one with little honour in capitalist society, yet with great honour within his own class. Morally, socially, politically, the working-class militant is the key figure in the contemporary crisis. In the battles that are to come, the working class will create many new leaders from its own ranks, provided that those who see the need in advance can help prepare to way forward.

Power workers and the Labour Movement

As we have emphasised at various points in this pamphlet, the power workers are potentially among the strongest groups of workers in the British labour movement. Only occasionally, up to now, has this power been revealed.

In the coming months and years, the British working class faces more challenges to its welfare and organisation than for a generation and more. Unemployment is rising. The welfare services are being deliberately undermined. The rights of trade unionists to organise in self-defence are limited and threatened by the Industrial Relation Act. In every area of life we find the employers desperately trying to solve the problems of a decaying capitalist order at the expense of the working class.

The power workers and their families are as affected by all these developments as any other workers. And their struggles are interconnected with those of other workers. Thus, the undoubted defeat of the supply workers in 1970-71 paved the way for the defeat of the postmen's strike and other workers' claims. For the working class, the old slogan is as relevant today as ever: united we stand, divided we fall.

Power workers cannot afford to ignore their connections with the rest of the working class. As the story of the December 1970 work-to-rule demonstrated sharply, that is a road to defeat. There is an ever more urgent need, in the localities, for bodies which will enable shop stewards from different unions and different industries to come together to discuss common problems, and to organise solidarity action of all kinds for any workers in dispute. Had such bodies existed in December 1970, for instance, they could have made sure that the supply workers' real case was explained to workers in other industries, so that these workers could understand what was happening and prevent the employers and Government from gaining their major propaganda victory.

The 'power game' is a struggle which involves the whole of the working class on one side, and the entire employing class on the other. The future is plain: either the employers will use unemployment, legislation, productivity agreements and a host of other legal, political and economic attacks to drive us downward and backward, or the working class will march forward, in democratically controlled organisations, to seize control of the industries and society in which they have for so long been exploited, and which generations of workers have built from their own sweat. In the 1970s the struggle for power will encompass far more than the electricity industry. Power workers must be ready to play their full part.

60 *Contact*, September 1969.
61 H. A. Clegg, *General Union*, 1954, p. 71.
62 *Sheffield Star*, 27 August 1971, citing a 'top secret Electricity Council Report'.

All workers in the Supply Industry, whether manual or white-collar, should read . . .

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THE EMPLOYERS' OFFENSIVE
productivity deals and how to fight them

by Tony Cliff

Ten years ago productivity bargaining was a new and strange phenomenon to most workers in British industry. Today it is at the very centre of our industrial life. Employers, trade unions and above all government ministers have come to champion the cause of 'productivity'. The Prices and Incomes policy, at first hardly more than 'wage freeze' in disguise, is now aimed at forcing workers to abandon the straight wage claim in favour of a productivity deal. Already more than 30 per cent of industrial workers are covered by such deals; many are coming back for the second or third 'bite at the cherry'. But an increasing number of workers are finding they got a very bad bargain, that the relatively large wage increases have soon been eaten away by inflation but the conditions they sold and the changes in work practice they accepted have become a serious threat to job security, earnings and, above all, trade union organisation within the factory.

The central argument of this book is to show that 'productivity' is part of a major offensive by the employing class of this country to shift the balance of forces in industry permanently in their direction. The author has investigated over 100 'deals' in order to discover the underlying trends that go to make up the offensive, to show how techniques such as Time and Motion Study, Measured Day Work and Grading Schemes are aimed at 'disciplining' the workers and undermining the power of the shop stewards who, more than anything else, have been the instrument by which workers have maintained their standards in the last 20 years.

In addition to investigating almost the entire output of the Prices and Incomes Board, Tony Cliff has drawn directly on the experience of workers who have been involved in productivity deals in a whole range of industries. In the final chapters he attempts to draw up a strategy for fighting productivity deals and concludes that the total nature of the employers' offensive requires a total strategy in reply—that is a socialist strategy.

There is no doubt that in the field of productivity bargaining employers are at an enormous advantage when it comes to access to information, facts and advice. This book aims to give shop stewards and their members the same advantages and to play a small part in arming the working class to resist the 'productivity offensive'.

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